



SAFETY ALERT 06-00

17th Coast Guard District
United States Coast Guard
P. O. Box 25517
Juneau, Alaska 99802
www.uscg.mil/d17/m/cfvs.html

CALL FOR A FREE DOCKSIDE EXAM

MSO Anchorage	271-6725	MSD Sitka	966-5454
MSO Valdez	835-7223	MSD Ketchikan	225-4496
MSO Juneau	463-2448	MSD Kodiak	486-5918
MSD Dutch Harbor	581-3466	MSD Kenai	283-3292

FISHING VESSEL SINKS, 3 CREW SAVED, SOUTH OF KETCHIKAN, ALASKA

Background: The Seventeenth Coast Guard District Safety Alert program provides timely safety-related information of “Lessons Learned” from marine casualties in support of the Coast Guard’s “Ready for Sea” safety program.

Incident: In the early evening of May 28, 2000 a 29 foot gillnetter, recreationally fishing 2 miles south of Ketchikan off Dall Point, took on water and sank in 3-5 foot seas and 20 knot winds. The operator was alerted to the flooding when seawater flowed freely over the transom. The vessel listed to port as operator made a mayday call on VHF Channel 80 and capsized within minutes. The Mayday was promptly relayed by a third party in Metlakatla to the Coast Guard Communications Center in Juneau. Coast Guard Station Ketchikan personnel overheard the radio call and immediately got underway in a 41 foot utility boat (UTB). The UTB crew spotted and rescued the three people from the sunken boat, who were in the water clinging to a galley stove fuel tank amid other debris. Although personal flotation devices (PFDs), visual distress signals and ring life buoy were on the vessel, no one was able to grab them prior to abandoning the vessel. The three family members were transported to Ketchikan, treated by medical personnel and released.

Lessons Learned: There are “Ready for Sea” safety factors that are relevant to this incident and several lessons learned.

1. Mariners should assess the weather before departing the dock and while underway. The sea and wind conditions most likely hastened the capsizing of the vessel.
2. Training in emergency situations is critical. Conducting drills at the dock and while underway prepare crewmembers for emergency situations. In this situation, one person could have made the MAYDAY call, another grab the PFDs and the third grab the ring life buoy. Be prepared!
3. Properly functioning bilge alarms and pumps provide an early warning and time to conduct damage control and prevent the vessel’s sinking. Routinely test alarms and pumps.
4. PFDs save lives and should be worn when working on deck and otherwise stowed in a readily accessible location. Carry immersion suits for each person on board, in addition to a PFD. Immersion suits offer protection against the cold water. Additionally, the bright orange colors and reflective tape on PFDs and immersion suits aid rescuers in locating survivors.
5. The Coast Guard and most vessels monitor VHF Channel 16. VHF radios should be left on channel 16 so in the event of an emergency a MAYDAY call will reach Search and Rescue units without delay. A portable VHF radio, visual distress signals, and flashlight are effective means of alerting nearby vessels and search parties of your location. These items should be readily accessible.
6. The vessel did not have a current Coast Guard dockside exam. Exams are free and often can identify safety deficiencies that can lead to loss of a vessel and/or the crew.